

ABSTRACT
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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE
CAUSE AND CONTINUATION**

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The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the factors that specifically contribute to the cause and continuation of domestic violence. Data were gathered from 29 women who had reportedly been in abusive relationships or were presently in abusive relationships. A nonprobability sampling technique was used to collect the data. In addition to descriptive statistics, nonparametric statistics through cross tabulations were used.

According to the review of literature search that was conducted prior to the survey, there were many factors that seemed to cause or contribute to the continuation of domestic violence. These factors included learned helplessness, the cycle of violence, socialization and family functioning, social acceptance, the feminization of poverty, and substance use and abuse. Contrary to the review of literature, the study revealed that the above mentioned factors did not seem to cause or influence the continuation of domestic violence.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE
CAUSE AND CONTINUATION**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK**

**BY
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Spousal abuse is widespread and affects all members of the family unit. The results are usually devastating on the family unit. Lives are sometimes lost, people end up in jail or prison, children may grow up in foster care or find themselves growing up with unexpressed anger and resentment. This in turn affects their behavior as an adult. Family members may experience anger, as well as guilt.

For years spousal abuse was not recognized as a social problem. Sadly enough, the issue receives the most attention at the time that a victim dies. Law enforcement and hospitals have not fully been able to manage or control the violence. Shelters do not stop the violence from occurring. Clergymen are often unsure as to whether or not they should discuss the issues in their churches. Society has taken on the attitude that what goes on within an intimate relationship should remain within that intimate relationship. When in fact, time has shown that what goes on inside of a particular family unit will eventually spread to the community.

Evidence suggest that spousal abuse is on the rise in the United States. According to the Council on Battered Women's Fact Sheet for 1994:

FBI statistics show one out of every four relationships in the United States is characterized by battering. The United States

Surgeon General has said that battering is the single largest cause of injuries requiring medical treatment for women, more common than auto accidents, muggings and rapes combined. Evidence also suggest that at least fifty percent of all women will experience some form of battering during their lifetime.¹

Other research has also been done to validate how wide spread spousal abuse is. According to Harris and Cook, "an estimated three to four million women in the United States experience physical abuse by their intimate partner. There are 1300 women murdered each year by their husbands or their boyfriends."² This article shows there are 30,000 emergency room visits each year that can be attributed to spousal abuse. There are many more astounding facts that are available to justify one's cause for concern.

Statement of the Problem

Spousal abuse is widespread and the reasons behind why men batter and women remain are varied. There are numerous studies and philosophies that have been historically used to explain this occurrence. Wife beating, wife abuse, spousal abuse, conjugal abuse, conjugal violence and wife battering are all terms used to describe the same phenomena. Just as there has been many terms used to describe the same issue there has also been many theoretical

¹Council on Battered Women, Fact Sheet (Atlanta, GA: Council on Battered Women, 1994), 1.

²Jocelyn Elders, "American Violence is Home Grown," Focus Magazine (April 1994): 3.

frameworks used to address the issue. The four major categories include individual, sociological, socio-structural, and ecological models--none of which have been able to completely identify and provide solutions to this growing problem. Although these theories have been instrumental in identifying factors that can identify abusive relationships as well as steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of violence occurring, they have not been able to completely eradicate spousal abuse.

There are many variables that can be readily identified as contributing to spousal abuse. If questioned about what contributes to spousal abuse many would suggest fear, lack of money, low self-esteem and the thought of your children not having a father. These are often critical factors that if not thoroughly addressed will hinder a woman's desire and her ability to leave. With every attempt to leave, the violence escalates, isolation becomes more rigid, and the woman may become more bound to the situation than before. Society must create an environment so that when these women make attempts to leave, they are greeted with an environment with equal job opportunities. These women need a safe haven where they can be free from fear and torment. There may be a need for clothes and furniture; however, with all these things in place there is still a missing key element. That element is the need for women to have an environment where they can receive equal rights and

opportunities to restore themselves to wholeness. These women will usually be coming out of long lasting abusive relationships. A female victim is assaulted an average of 7 to 10 times before she even seeks assistance. By the time she decides to leave in most cases she has suffered abuse over a period of years. What is key here is to understand that by the time a woman decides to leave, her fear of dying has superseded her fear of abuse. The question here is why should or would a woman need to fear death before she decides to leave an abusive relationship?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into what factors specifically contribute to the cause and continuation of domestic violence. What type of social support must be made available to battered women in order for them to leave? Are there other factors that should come into play that strengthen the effectiveness of currently established social programs that are geared toward empowering victims of abuse? Would not so common factors, such as substance abuse and use, contribute to a woman remaining in such a relationship? Because churches have steered away from addressing this issue, would their intervention improve the situation? Does the absence or presence of these factors make a difference? If so, to what extent. How could social workers best incorporate these findings into their treatment and prevention plans when

working with clients? These are the ideas and questions that will be addressed in this paper.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Violence and Domestic Violence

You cannot truly grasp how widespread the problem of spousal abuse is without looking at the issue of violence. For the purpose of this paper, violence will be defined as "an act carried out with the intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person."¹ Notice that there are two elements in this definition. The first is an action and the second is an intention. An act simply requires action or effort on the part of the individual. If, for example, a man shoots at his wife and misses, this is still considered violence. Intention refers to whether or not a person intended to cause pain or injury. An injury may occur, but unless it was intentional, it is considered to be an accident. The key here is when an act occurs with the intention to cause pain or injury, particularly to coerce someone to do or not do something or to see the other person in pain, this then is abuse.

While this paper focuses primarily on physical violence, this is not an implication that physical abuse is the only type of abuse or even the worst type of abuse. Abuse occurs in many forms other than physical including emotional, sexual, financial and verbal. Violence among

¹Dean D. Knudsen and Joann L. Miller, Abused and Battered (New York: Walter De Gruyer, Inc., 1991), 18.

family and friends are more common than violence among strangers. Sexual assault, verbal assault, and murder are more common among family members than strangers.² Siblings often assault each other but it is recognized as being trivial. While it may seem trivial at times, nevertheless it is an act of violence. In a study conducted by Strauss and Gelles in 1986, an estimated 8.7 million couples reported experiencing violence during that year.³ There were 3.4 million incidents of "severe" assaults. These included incidents that involved kicking, punching, choking or use of weapons--all of which usually carry a high risk of causing injury.

Many people think that violence does not affect them. What we fail to take into consideration is the emotional and financial burdens that are created by acts of violence. Once we begin to recognize that each incident is usually worse than the preceding incident of violence and that each incident costs us something, whether financially or socially, then perhaps a greater stand against violence will occur. Social workers and other helping professionals must get involved to find an answer to this problem.

A study was presented by Surgeon General Elders at the American Medical Association's National Conference on Family Violence in Washington, D.C., in March 1994. This

²Ibid., 18.

³Ibid., 18.

study found that violence is transferred from the home to the community. This ensures society that if violence is occurring inside the home, it will eventually spread forth into our communities.⁴ This is why there must be a collaborative effort on the part of our communities to heal the disease of violence.

Many times when violence occurs, particularly severe violence, there is a need for emergency medical attention. According to the study conducted by the Surgeon General:

The average cost of a violent injury was \$44,000 in 1992. In 1989, about 80 percent of gunshot and stabbing victims treated in some urban trauma centers were uninsured, underinsured, or Medicaid-eligible. About 85 percent of such hospital costs are cost-shifted onto the privately insured. The total medical cost of all violence in the U.S. was \$13.5 billion in 1992 (\$3 billion due to suicides and suicide attempts and \$10.5 billion due to interpersonal violence). This includes murder, rape, assault, robbery, drunk driving, and arson.⁵

This same study showed that 30 percent of all emergency rooms visits by women result from domestic assaults. Furthermore, more than 1,300 women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends each year, and 2.7 million cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in a single year. Other data suggests that there are at least 100,000 hospitalization days that can be attributed to spousal

⁴Jocelyn Elders, "American Violence is Home Grown," Focus Magazine (April 1994): 1.

⁵Ibid., 1.

abuse. There are 30,000 emergency room visits and an estimated 2 million incidents of male and female battering occur each year. These statistics are continually repeated. Investigations into violence show that there is a definite need for a resolution of violence because regardless of the form of violence, society seems to pay the cost.

This paper will focus particularly on domestic violence in the form of spousal abuse. Spousal abuse has become an increasingly common and complex form of violence and abuse. For decades, domestic violence workers have pleaded with the public to take family violence seriously. Inadequacies in state and federal laws, negligence by police, prosecutors and judges, and lack of funding to support shelters and hot lines which serve to protect women from their abusers seem to contribute to the continuation of the problem.

Factors That Contribute to the Causation and the Continuation of Domestic Violence

Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness is the most widely used concept to explain why women stay in abusive relationships. Learned helplessness explains how a woman learns to become dependent upon others. This behavior is then transferred into their intimate relationships. Society and culture often set the roles that men and women are to assume as adults. This socialization begins at a very young age. It may be as

subtle as dressing a baby girl in pink while dressing a baby boy in blue. It could also take the form of scolding a little boy for having feminine ways or little girls for having masculine ways.

During the socialization process people learn how to cope with all types of situations. Some people will find it best for them to tackle problems head first, while others may not intervene until the situation is in an explosive state. Oftentimes, women are told that they should be passive and submissive, and are taught to be helpless and dependent upon men.

Learned helplessness consists of three basic components. The first component is concerned with the batter's information about what will happen.⁶ This could mean that the batterer has already clarified his intention which is abuse. The second component involves the thinking or the cognitive representation about what will happen.⁷ For instance, once the abuser makes it known that he plans to abuse the woman, she believes that he will do it regardless of what she says or does. The battered makes an unknowledgeable voluntary consent to the abuse. This is unknowledgeable because she is not aware of her options or alternatives at this point. The battered may feel destined

⁶Lenore E. Walker, The Battered Woman (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 54.

⁷Ibid., 54.

to be abused by the batterer. She, at this point, expects to be battered and conditions herself to accept it. The third component is the battered's behavior toward what happens.⁸ According to the learned helplessness theory, she does nothing to resist the abuse.

Learned helplessness can be identified as "a condition in which a subject does not attempt to escape from a painful or noxious situation after learning in a previous similar situation that escape is not possible." Learned helplessness suggests that the batterer initiates the abuse. This could have a great deal to do with the fact that many abusive men show evidence of insufficient coping mechanisms. The inadequate or ineffective coping skills result due to the rewarding or negative behaviors. With learned helplessness the batterer may constantly be rewarded for exemplifying abusive and violent behavior. For example, if a man beats his wife and the police officer does not arrest him, the reward is not being arrested. The beating may also result in the wife not behaving in the manner that triggered the violence. The power to manipulate becomes his reward. Martin Seligman identified these three components as well, but a little different. He proposed that three components included the following: (a) motivational impairment, (b) intellectual impairment, and (c) emotional trauma. His description illustrates how learned helplessness is a

⁸Ibid., 54.

twofold concept. It is both internal and external. The person develops in their mind an association between their own behavior and the outcome. The association with battered women is that regardless of their behavior the battering will occur. So the women develop the frame of thought that suggest why try to leave when he will only bring you back. Most women will readily admit that the beating after an attempt to leave is usually worse than before they left. These women decide that it is useless to change their actions or environment because it does not reduce the likelihood of abuse recurring.

The Cycle of Violence

Another common variable related to spousal abuse is the cycle of violence. The cycle of violence is an aspect of the Battered Woman Syndrome that is best described by Lenore E. Walker.⁹ Ms. Walker describes this cycle of tension building behavior, the battering incident, and then the reassurance that the battering will not occur unless either the battered or the batterer takes the initiative to stop.

During the first phase of the cycle, tension builds as a result of verbal outburst, muttering, confrontation, and minor acts of violence, emotional threats, or controlling behavior. This tension escalates until a

⁹Lenore E. Walker, The Battered Woman Syndrome (New York: Springer, 1984), 72.

violent incident occurs which is the second phase.

Following the battering incident there is a period of time where he is very apologetic. He assures her of his love for her with words, gifts and acts of kindness. During this honeymoon phase, she realizes that this is the man she always loved and is deeply concerned about his well being. This phase soon dwindles away as the tension begins to build and the cycle starts over again.

Although the person may take the initiative, it becomes necessary for family, friends and society to support the changing of the behavior. Walker points out that in order for a woman to escape a battering relationship she must learn to use escape skill compatible to the survival skills already adapted.¹⁰ These escape plans could include devising a plan of action, and making attempts to secure finances and living arrangements. Most often a battered woman will not be able to do this without outside help.

Socialization and Family Functioning

It has been stated that her relationship or connectedness to another determines a woman's identity. Women are often identified as being someone's daughter, wife or mother. This has been coined as "daughterhood," which is "the process by which women begin to learn what it means to

¹⁰Ibid., 72.

be feminine, to be a wife, and to be a mother."¹¹ Girls learn to value themselves, as others desire them. This sense of worth is transferred from parents to mate as the girl moves from childhood to adulthood. The process of socialization is more in depth than learning how to act. It is also learning how to think.

Both males and females are taught sex roles. Culture permits and welcomes aggression by men. It is expected that men are to be rugged and ruthless. Men are shunned or criticized for failing while women are simply comforted. Women are considered true failures when their relationships break up and their children go astray. Straus identified what has been termed cherished cultural standards that not only permit but also encourage husband-to-wife violence: (a) greater authority of men in our culture, (b) male aggressiveness, (c) wife/mother role as the preferred status for women, and (d) male domination and orientation of the criminal justice system, which provides little legal relief for battered women.¹²

In 1990, Smith identified what he termed "patriarchal norms" that contribute to wife beating. They include: (a) the man has the right to determine if his wife may work; (b)

¹¹Ola W. Barnett and Alyce D. Laviolette, It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), 2.

¹²M. A. Straus, "Sexual Inequality, Cultural Norms, and Wife Beating," Victimology: An International Journal 1 (1976): 54.

the man has the right to decide if his wife may leave the home at night; (c) it is important to show the wife that he is the head of the household; and (d) a man is entitled to have sex with his wife even if she does not want to.¹³

The primary institution by which we are socialized is our family. In most families according to Barnett,

mothers and fathers struggle with the obligations and restrictions of their sex roles. . . . The family creed takes the form of rules used to survive within the family of origin. Children accept the family standards and quite often go on to practice them. These skills become internalized responses, and their expression is almost reflective."¹⁴

These behaviors are usually maladaptive and are a reflection of inadequate family and cultural teachings. Although many battered women come from loving families, there is a commonality amongst battered women. They are usually raised in a culture where women have status that are lower than men and they have no belief or faith in change. They tend to have a strong love for the man and a serious commitment to the relationship. Oftentimes these women truly anticipate that their partner will change if they are patient and understanding. They associate the abuse with

¹³M. D. Smith, "Patriarchal Ideology and Wife Beating: A Test of a Feminist Hypothesis," Violence and Victims 5 (1990): 257.

¹⁴Ola W. Barnett and Alyce D. Laviolette, It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), 3.

their actions alone and never attribute anything to the behavior of their partner.

Social Acceptance

Domestic violence has become so much a part of normal family functioning that people hardly stop to watch. Peterson wrote that physical violence between family members is a normal part of family life in most societies . . . and in American society in particular.¹⁵ It is not uncommon for a man to beat his wife or girlfriend. Many men have viewed the marriage license as a license to hit. This idea has been upheld or supported by laws such as "Rule of Thumb," which proposed that it was acceptable for a man to beat his wife with a rod or stick providing it was not wider than his thumb.

Feminists have advanced violence against women to include many aspects of abuse. Women are more likely than men to experience oppression from dominant forces. Oppression may take the form of hiring policies, salary and promotion procedures or cultural stereotypes. This oppression contributes to a woman's inability to leave an abusive relationship. Oftentimes women will view their present situation better than if they were to leave.

Although divorce has become increasingly acceptable, many women feel ashamed to admit that their relationships

¹⁵David Peterson, "Wife Beating an American Tradition," Journal of Interdisciplinary History (1992): 98.

failed or have problems. Women may also feel that their relationships will change if they modify behavior; therefore, these women may develop routines or behaviors to try to pacify the relationship. Those people who may have knowledge of abuse within the home may suggest having dinner ready when he gets home or giving in and letting him have his way as an attempt to remedy the problem. Most women who have been in battered relationships will admit that this does not usually stop the violence for long, if at all.

Society tends to think that somehow if there is violence in the home it is due to the woman's behavior. We want to see her as lacking morals or values. She is criticized for leaving and criticized for staying. If she leaves, society says that she was only there when things were going good and she does not love the batterer because she is leaving. If she stays, she is seen as stupid and deserving of the abuse. Women are often caught between whether to stay or to leave. Because both ideas are so pervasive throughout society, it is quite difficult to choose which is right for a particular situation. It is worth noting that society does not fully support a woman, regardless of which choice she makes. We want her to leave but are not able to assist her when she does. Yet if she stays, we attribute the abuse to her. The victim is seen as more responsible for being battered when she does not leave regardless of the numerous reasons as to why she stays.

The Feminization of Poverty

The feminization of poverty is another social phenomenon that does not offer support for a woman to leave a battering situation. More often than not, in an abusive relationship the man has control over the finances. If the woman works she will usually turn over her entire check to the man or need to account for and show proof of every penny spent. Since it is hard for her to save her money or have control over how it is spent, technically speaking she is in poverty.

There are four main factors that contribute to the feminization of poverty. They include labor market factors, government income or benefits, lack of policies to promote economic equality, and demographic factors.¹⁶

Women are more likely to work fewer hours than men, if they work at all. This is particularly true in capitalistic societies. This could contribute to their need to divide their time between the labor market and responsibilities at home. Others may not choose to work part-time but are unable to find full-time employment; therefore, they are underemployed. Part-time wages tend to be lower and part-time benefits are usually unrewarding. Full-time wages are also lower for women than men. This is true even if women attain higher educational levels.

¹⁶Gertrude S. Goldberg, "The Feminization of Poverty: Only in America?," Social Policy Magazine (1987): 3.

With divorce rates increasing, women getting married later in life or the father being absent, women may find it necessary to ask for assistance to meet their needs and the needs of their children. This assistance may be needed to supplement or replace earnings. These benefits are often not sufficient to meet the total needs of the family and do not provide much security. These social programs are central to political debates and the funding for these programs suffer from frequent and large cuts.

Equal pay for both men and women and flexible employment opportunities to meet the needs of women are examples of policies and legislation that have been implemented to specifically address the needs of women. These "laws only affect inequalities between men and women doing the same jobs in the same organization." Also, they may not affect the level of wages in jobs that are predominantly held by women. Because it can be quite difficult to implement these laws and develop clear definitions of terms such as "equal work," these laws have not done much to reduce the poverty of women and their children. Women are also much more likely to lose or quit jobs due to difficulties with childcare.

Demographic factors such as the marital status of the woman, number of children, and race will also determine to what extent women may experience poverty. Single-headed households are more likely to experience poverty where the

responsibilities are shared. Blacks are consistently more likely to live in poverty than whites. The more children in the household, the more resources needed. Oftentimes resources are not as readily available to single-headed households as those with two parents.

Because society has not created an environment where secure economic situations await women who desire to leave their abusive relationships, the woman oftentimes stay. While society may say that a woman can leave her abuser, if she leaves what awaits her may be a life of poverty for her and her children. Until the benefits of leaving outweigh the benefits of staying women may not leave their abusers.

Substance Use and Abuse

Many people connect domestic violence with substance use and abuse in that they assume that the substance is causing the violence. However, there is another side to this story. It is common knowledge that many people use substances to escape their problems. Consequently, their coping mechanisms become getting drunk off of alcohol or high off of some other substance. Perhaps the bruises that a woman may receive, hurt less physically and psychologically if she self medicates with her substance of choice.

Learning occurs through conditioning and observations. Just as women learn to become dependent upon men they also learn to become dependent upon substances.

Spousal abuse is usually comprised of many interrelated complex issues. These issues are often synonymous to those involved in instances where substances are abused. Contrary to popular stereotypes, alcohol and drug abuse among women occurs at similar rates among those who are poor and those who are not and among white people and people of color. Major risk factors include childhood sexual or physical abuse, adult victimization by domestic violence, and a spouse or partner who abuses substances.¹⁷ Bennett states that their husbands and lovers are battering women of every age, race, ethnicity, and social class. He also points out that major changes in the family life, such as loss of income and death, increase the propensity or level of violence in relationships of long duration.¹⁸ Studies have suggested that there are shared characteristics among families where substance abuse occurs and in families where women are abused. This includes:

inter-generational transmission of the problem, frequent crisis states, the abuser blaming the partner for his behavior, the abuser forgetting details of the episode, isolation of the non-abusive partner, retarded emotional development in the family, impulsiveness and low self-esteem among other family members, loss of control used as a

¹⁷Margaret E. Goldberg, "Substance-Abusing Women: False Stereotypes and Real Needs," Social Work 40, no. 6 (November 1995): 789.

¹⁸Larry W. Bennett, "Substance Abuse and the Domestic Assault of Women," National Association of Social Workers (1995): 760.

coping mechanism, and short-term payoff in tension reduction.¹⁹

Many researchers and domestic violence advocates would argue that suggesting that there is a connection between domestic violence and substance use is degrading. However, the fact cannot be ignored that many incidents of violence occur while either the batterer or the battered is under the influence of substances. One study found that "one-fourth to one-half of domestically abusive men had substance abuse problems."²⁰

Alcohol and other substances have been proven to affect a person in one of three different ways. The first way is to directly or indirectly cause change in the thinking, physiology, emotion, or motivation to increase interpersonal power. The second of the three ways is to cause a cognitive disruption. The substances will impair the user's ability to perceive, integrate, and process information. Another way has been identified as affecting a person's power. Substances, particularly alcohol, contribute to the perception that they have increased personal power over others. This perception leads to their actions. While research has not been able to support the notion that psychoactive drugs alone cause violent behavior, it has been able to show that psychoactive drug use does

¹⁹Ibid., 760.

²⁰Ibid., 760.

increase the likelihood of domestic assault. Bennett in his research indicated that there were at least ten factors that serve as what he termed "antecedents or mediators of the substance abuse-woman abuse relationship."²¹ Studies conducted by other researchers found that "alcoholic women receive greater levels of physical and verbal abuse than nonalcoholic women."²² Bennett suggested that "a woman using drugs or alcohol increases the likelihood that she will be battered, increases the likelihood that her male partner will also be drinking when he batters her, and increases her chances of physical injury."²³

Theories

There are approximately four general classifications by which domestic violence can be viewed. Gelles first identified these models in 1993. These categories include: individual models (psychological), sociological models (socio-psychological), social structural models (feminist), and ecological models.²⁴

Individual models attribute violence primarily to the characteristics of either the perpetrator or the victim.

²¹Ibid., 764.

²²Ibid., 764.

²³Ibid., 764.

²⁴Diane C. Dwyer, "Domestic Violence Research: Theoretical and Practice Implications for Social Work," Clinical Social Work Journal (Summer 1995): 189.

These characteristics may range from poor self-control and low self-esteem to mental illness or substance use. Usually individual models are helpful in identifying risk factors associated with violence.

Sociological models attribute violence to social structures, particularly the family. Sociological models tend to investigate family dynamics to explain the problem. Such factors as family structure, stress, the transmission of violence from one generation to the next, and family interaction patterns. There is not much focus given towards any one particular variable or characteristic. These models are commonly used to illustrate how a person progresses to the point of becoming a victim or a batterer.

The third set of models used during research of domestic violence is the structural model. This model is commonly referred to as the feminist model. It proposes that in order to understand domestic violence, you must first understand the power struggles between men and women. It proposes that domestic violence is deeply rooted in the historical imbalances of social control over women in general. These models will always take into account institutional gender bias of judges, lawmakers, and enforcement personnel.

There is another category of models used to investigate domestic violence. It states that none of the above mentioned categories can be used in exclusion of the

other. This is the ecological model. It integrates aspects of the psychological, socio-psychological and feminist models into what is called a holistic approach. The ecological model offers a more comprehensive avenue by which to explain or study a situation. This is the most commonly used model for domestic violence research due to the complexity of the problem. This theory will be used as the basis for my research.

Hypothesis

There has been much research done in past times on the causes of domestic violence. What needs to be done to prevent domestic violence? What are possible warning signs that should alert you to be aware of possible dangers? Papers and discussions have been written to explain what procedure women can take to leave the house and flee from her abuser. None of these have worked. The incidents of spousal abuse have not changed. Women are still being abused and murdered. Although shelters are being built and funds are being made available to support their efforts, when the women leave they oftentimes go back. It can be hypothesized that women remain in abusive relationships due to social situations that neither support, encourage nor sustain them once they leave.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design that will be used for this study is a cross-sectional survey design. These designs are mostly used when exploratory and descriptive research is being conducted. They can be used in explanatory designs to test relationships among characteristics of samples of populations. They are designed to study some phenomena by taking a cross section of it at one time and analyzing that cross section. The group will not be randomly selected nor will there be a pretest or another measurement for comparison. Cross-sectional designs are useful when there is a need for data on characteristics of a sample or a population. These designs allow a researcher to determine whether or not an actual problem exists, and if so, to what extent.

Cross-sectional survey designs do have an advantage over other research designs. They tend to be less expensive and relatively easy. Also data can be collected quickly. One disadvantage of this design is that it is unable to determine an order in the variable relationship. In other words, what leads to what. The conclusions are based on observations made only at one time. This can hinder you from understanding how a population shifted from one state to another.

Cross-sectional designs are used most often when surveys are used as the data collection method. This design can be written as follows:

$$X \ O$$

Where:

X = Independent Variable

O = First and Only Measurement of the Dependent Variables

Research Setting

The setting where the research was conducted was at the West End and South DeKalb Malls. The West End Mall serves mostly Fulton County residents and the South DeKalb Mall services primarily DeKalb County. Other counties have access to these malls as well. This population was selected because the researcher realizes that many of the women who are presently in abusive relationships are not in shelters. Many of the women reported that the police had never been called and they did not receive any treatment from medical facilities.

The sampling procedure used for this study was a non-probability sampling there is no guarantee that the sample is representative of an entire population. The type of non-probability sampling used in this study was convenience sampling. In convenience sampling the persons who are available are used as participants. The entire

population is used as opposed to a sample of that population.

Data Collection Procedure and Instrumentation

Women were approached by the researcher and asked if they were currently in or had previously been in an abusive relationship. If so, they were informed briefly about the purpose of the study and what type of information would be needed from them. If they expressed an interest in participating, they were given a survey and a cover letter which explained the purpose of the study. The survey contained approximately 25 questions which were designed to collect information on various factors that have been identified as contributing to the cause and continuation of spousal abuse. However, no identifying information, such as name, address, or phone number, was requested.

Face-to-face interviews were utilized because they yield a higher response rate than other survey methods. The responses obtained during face-to-face interviews tend to be more accurate and in depth.

Data Analysis

For this particular study, non-parametric statistical tests were used. Cross tabulations and chi-squares were used to determine the association between the variables. Frequency distributions were computed for all demographic variables.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The following presentations are the results of collected data. The null hypothesis states there is not a relationship between helplessness, economic security, fear, the cycle of violence, socialization and social acceptance, substance abuse, and the cause and continuation of spousal abuse. Tables 1 through 6 reflect the demographic makeup of the respondents.

The participants of this study ranged in age from 18 to 48. Four (13.8%) of the respondents were 18 years old. Five (17.2%) of the respondents were 19 years old. One (3.4%) respondent was 20 years old. One (3.4%) respondent was 22 and another respondent (3.4%) reported being 23 years old. Two (6.9%) of the respondents responded that they were 24. One (3.4%) respondent was 25 years old while two (6.9%) respondents were 27. One (3.4%) respondent was age 28, another two (6.9%) were 29 years old. Of the remaining respondents, one (3.4%) was 34. One (3.4%) respondent was 38. One (3.4%) respondent was 39 and another one (3.4%) had reported being 40 years old. The last one (3.4%) of the participants were 48 years old.

As indicated in Table 2, 100% of the 29 respondents were female.

Table 3 shows that 22 (75.9%) of the respondents were Black. Of the remaining respondents, six (20.7%) were white

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: AGE

Age	Frequency	Percent
18	4	13.8
19	5	17.2
22	1	3.4
23	1	3.4
24	2	6.9
25	1	3.4
27	2	6.9
28	1	3.4
29	2	6.9
34	2	6.9
38	2	6.9
39	1	3.4
40	1	3.4
44	1	3.4
45	1	3.4
48	1	3.4
Totals	29	100.0

and one (3.4%) reported being a race other than Black or white.

The level of education for the respondents can be found in Table 4. Six (20.7%) of the respondents reported having less than a high school diploma and the same amount (20.7%) had undergraduate degrees. However, the majority

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: GENDER

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	29	100.0
Totals	29	100.0

TABLE 3
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: RACE

Race	Frequency	Percent
Black	22	75.9
White	6	20.7
Other	1	3.4
Totals	29	100.0

(14 or 48.3%) of the population reported having high school diplomas. The remaining three respondents (10.3%) had graduate degrees.

Employment status and annual income are shown in Tables 5 and 6. As shown in Table 5, eighteen (62.1%) of the respondents are employed. The remaining thirteen

TABLE 4
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: EDUCATION

Education	Frequency	Percent
Less than High School	6	20.7
High School	14	48.7
Undergraduate	6	20.7
Graduate or more	3	10.3
Totals	29	100.0

TABLE 5
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: EMPLOYMENT

Employment	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	62.1
No	11	37.9
Totals	29	100.0

(37.9%) of the respondents were unemployed. Fifteen (51.7%) of the respondents have annual incomes less than \$14,999. Seven (24.1%) reported annual incomes between \$15,000 and \$24,999. Four (13.8%) of the respondents have annual

TABLE 6
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: INCOME

Income	Frequency	Percent
\$14,999 or less	15	51.7
\$15,000 to \$24,999	7	24.1
\$25,000 to \$34,999	4	13.8
\$35,000 or more	3	10.3
Totals	29	100.0

incomes ranging from \$25,000 to \$34,999. The final three (10.3%) respondents have incomes of \$35,000 or above.

Frequency distributions indicated that approximately an equal proportion of the women believed that they have control over the battering relationships (51.7% yes, 48.3% no). Sixteen (55.2%) of the respondents reported that they believe that they or their family members or friends would be harmed if they attempt to leave. Of the 29 respondents, 72.4% reported that they have been encouraged to leave the relationship, but only 41.4% believe they should leave.

As indicated in Table 6, 51.7% percent of the women had annual incomes of \$14,999 or below. They tended to be unemployed (62.1%) although they 69% believed that they have enough skills to secure employment that would support them and their children should they leave.

This study indicated that these women (72.4%) received threats (62.1%) and physical injury (72.4%) even following promises by their mates to stop (72.4%). The respondents felt that ending the relationship was the solution (86.2%).

Pearson's scores consistently showed that there was no relationship between the variables studied. Cross tabulations among variables also proved the null hypothesis to be correct. The null hypothesis states that there is not a relationship between the variables. The findings caused the researcher to accept the null hypothesis.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The indication that there is no relationship between the independent and dependent variable did not support the literature or the hypothesis. The women felt they had control over the battering situation. They believed they had the skills to secure employment to support themselves and their children after leaving. They had been encouraged by family and friends to leave and reported that their family and friends were willing to assist them financially if they left. All of the women had been in the abusive relationships for at least one year and did not necessarily choose leaving as a solution to the problem. The respondents reported that their mother and father did not tend to be abusive toward their mate. When the percentage of men and women who were abusive were compared, the males were more likely to be abusive than females. The study also found that the use of substances by either the batterer or the victim tended not to influence the battering situation.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this particular study included the following: (1) the sample size should have been larger, (2) a wider geographical area would have been more representative of an entire population, and (3) other variables could have been included to produce a better

rounded study. Because of the sample size and sampling technique, there is a lack of statistical significance. Without statistical significance data yielded from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of battered women.

Suggested Research Directions

There is a wealth of information that is available on domestic violence with varying theoretical backgrounds. Studying the characteristics of individuals who are or has been in abusive relationships and identifying those variables that serve as indicators of abusive behavior patterns can allow social workers to create and implement prevention strategies. Programs can be created that utilizes and recommends alternative solutions to problem solving other than violence and aggression. Studying the lives of women and men who have been in abusive relationships, particularly those who have been in repeated abusive relationships could prove to be invaluable. Large quantities of the studies that have been done are on women and men who are in shelters or who are receiving counseling. There is a large amount of abuse that goes on daily that is never reported to the police, social workers or the hospitals. Most abused women who are in shelters report that they have been abused several times, oftentimes over a period of years. Obviously there are some unmet needs or other factors that come into play other than the ones

mentioned in many research projects. Perhaps by studying or investigating the lifestyle and mindset of people who are in abusive relationships that are not in treatment or shelters, there would be some light shed on the issue. Often when women and men have received some form of intervention or treatment, their attitudes and opinions are affected by the intervention.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Social workers have an invaluable part in the area of domestic violence. Social workers usually encounter some aspect of domestic violence regardless of their setting. Social workers must be skilled in identifying, preventing, and treating the wounds from domestic violence. Social workers will use many of the autonomous social work skills to reach and assist those women who need their help. Social work values emphasize recognizing that each client has the right to decide for themselves what intervention they desire while at the same time keeping the best interest of the client in mind. When working with victims of abuse, it will become necessary to assess the needs of the client and then meet the needs of that client rather quickly. Oftentimes there is an immediate danger for these clients and time is very valuable.

Social workers should keep in mind that even though they may not directly deal with a victim there may be other instances where domestic violence will be an issue that needs to be addressed to some degree. For example, a college student has been very aggressive and angry following the death of his mother who was a victim of domestic violence. It would be impossible to effectively assist this client without addressing the issues of domestic violence. Because social workers use a holistic approach to treatment

we may recognize the need to deal with issues other than the one presented. School violence is on the rise. Social workers are needed to recommend and evaluate policies and procedures on disciplining children in school settings. Social workers can use their knowledge and understanding of factors that attribute to the cause of domestic violence behavior in counseling and referring for counseling. Social workers serve as educators to the population in general and are in key positions to advocate and implement policy that is more friendly to the victims of domestic violence.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey will be used as part of the completion for a Master's thesis at Clark Atlanta University School of Social Work. The purpose of this particular study is to gain insight into various aspects of domestic violence. It is the goal of this research project to gather firsthand information from individuals who have been or are currently in abusive relationships as to what factors specifically contribute to the cause and continuation of domestic violence. It is my belief that this information is instrumental in developing programs that will be geared toward helping women in this position.

I appreciate your time. All information will be kept confidential. None of the questions ask for identifying information, such as name and address. This information will in no way be used for any purpose other than the purpose stated above. All information will be destroyed following the completion of this study.

Thank you again for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Theresha D. Compton
Clark Atlanta University Student

APPENDIX B

SPOUSAL ABUSE SURVEY

PART A: This portion deals specifically with issues and concerns that will be addressed in this research study.

Helplessness

1. Do you feel that you have control over the battering situation?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you believe ending the relationship is the solution to the battering problem?
☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Do you believe that you have any other choice than to stay with your abusive partner?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Economic Security

1. Do you have enough skills to secure employment that will support you and your children in the event that you leave the abusive relationship?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Are there family members or friends that are willing to financially assist you if you leave your partner?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Fear

1. Do you believe that you, your children or other family members will be physically harmed if you were to leave?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Has your partner threatened you or your family members or friends before?

_____ Yes

_____ No

3. Have you received an injury before due to the abuse of your partner?

_____ Yes

_____ No

The Cycle of Violence

1. Have your mate ever promised to stop his abusive behaviors?

_____ Yes

_____ No

2. If yes, did he continue his abusive behaviors?

_____ Yes

_____ No

3. How long have you or were you in the abusive relationship? Please state.

Socialization and Social Acceptance

1. Was or is your mother verbally or physically abusive to your father or her mate?

_____ Yes

_____ No

2. Was or is your father verbally or physically abusive to your mother or his mate?

_____ Yes

_____ No

3. Do you believe that you would lose your identity if you left your mate?

_____ Yes

_____ No

4. Have your family or friends encouraged you to leave the abusive relationship?

_____ Yes

_____ No

5. Do you believe that you should stay and try to work things out in the relationship?

_____ Yes

_____ No

6. If yes, please explain.

Substance Use

1. Does your partner use substances other than cigarettes?

_____ Yes

_____ No

2. Do you use substances other than cigarettes?

_____ Yes

_____ No

3. Does your partner batter you while under the influence of these substances?

_____ Yes

_____ No

PART B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

_____ Female

_____ Male

2. State your age. _____

3. What race do you consider yourself?

_____ Black
_____ White
_____ Other (Specify:_____)

3. What is your level of education?

_____ Less than high school diploma
_____ High school diploma
_____ Undergraduate degree
_____ Graduate degree or above

4. Are you employed? If so state your title.

_____ No _____ Yes _____

5. What is your average annual income?

_____ \$14,999 or under
_____ \$15,000 to \$24,999
_____ \$25,000 to \$34,999
_____ \$35,000 and above

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